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ABSTRACT

The college extracurricular experiences of Latina/o undergraduates were studies to learn more about the nature of students' experiences of Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students with Latina/o, minority, and other college student organizations. The study also examined the relative influence student, institutional, and involvement factors have on satisfaction with college and academic achievement. The research used a cross-sectional survey design, with surveys completed by 344 students (35% response rate). Puerto Rican and Chicana/o students did not differ much with regard to minority opinions and experiences, although Puerto Ricans tended to be more critical of Latina/o student organizations. Campus life has a significant effect on satisfaction with college and academic achievement, and participation in community-based organizations and minority student organizations has important influences on educational outcomes for Latina/o college students. (Contains 5 tables and 28 references.) (SLD)

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Latina/o Undergraduate Involvement with College Student Organizations and Its Effects on Specific Student Outcomes at Two, Large, Predominantly White, Midwestern Universities

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Introduction

Sometimes labeled as "the other education," participation in extracurricular activities provides opportunities for students to apply classroom knowledge to real world settings and develops skills that will assist in the practical realities of living after graduation (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1995). The added supplement of extracurricular activity involvement such as that found in college student organization participation can be a significant factor in a student's college experience. On most campuses, college student organizations tend to fall into the following categories: governing bodies, greek letter social organizations, student government groups, academic clubs and professional societies, honor societies, publication and media groups, service groups, intramural sports clubs, religious organizations, and special interest/cultural groups (Astin, 1993; Craig & Warner, 1991).

Research in extracurricular involvement has emphasized the importance of supplementing academic learning with learning that occurs outside the formal classroom environment. A variety of student development changes in regards to cognitive and affective growth are associated with participation in college extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activity involvement cultivates noticeable changes in a student's behavioral traits and personality characteristics (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The enhancement of student learning with activities outside the classroom is consistent with the initial goals of student affairs work; to develop the whole student (American Council on Education Studies, 1949).

Minority student organizations in higher education are fairly recent opportunities for extracurricular involvement. Most have come into existence on many predominantly white colleges and universities (PWIs) within the past thirty years (Johnson, 1997; Parra, Rios, & Gutierrez, 1976; Rooney, 1985). The more established minority college student organizations can trace their origins to the student movements of the 1960's and 1970's in which "minorities were struggling for identity within society", as well as for "identity, recognition, and integration into the majority community" within higher education (Chavez, 1982, p. 15). Although present on campus for only a short period of time, minority college

student organizations have provided a generation of minority students the opportunity to become involved with campus student life, as well as in community service and leadership development.

Latina/o college student organizations, like most minority student organizations, came into existence at PWIs during the late 1960's and early 1970's as a result of the high levels of youthful energy and activist commitment directed at social and educational issues. Despite the diversity apparent among the types of Latina/o college student organizations and their activities, their roots are firmly planted in social change, commitment to the Latina/o community, and the common goal to be student resources for social and emotional comfort and adjustment at PWIs (Davis, 1997; Moscoso, 1995; Trevino, 1992). Latina/o student organizations at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) have increased and grown, are diverse in their goals and activities, are committed to social change, and provide culturally relevant support systems for Latina/o students.

This study examines the college extracurricular experiences of Latina/o undergraduates. The primary purpose of this study is to learn more about the nature of Chicana/o and Puerto Rican student experiences with Latina/o, minority and other college student organizations. The study also examines the relative influence student, institutional, and involvement factors have on two specific educational outcomes: satisfaction with college and academic achievement. Two general research questions are examined:

1. Do any differences exist between Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students in their perceptions of Latina/o, minority, and other student organizations?
2. What influence does involvement in college extracurricular activities have on the educational outcomes of satisfaction with college and academic achievement (overall G.P.A.)?

Literature Review

While studies investigating the influence of extracurricular activities are extensive in the student affairs field, the following is not an exhaustive review of the literature on college student organizations. Its purpose is to provide a general understanding of the influence college student organization

participation has on several aspects of the college experience. Satisfaction with college and student academic learning will be addressed in order to assess the effect college student organization participation has on each. Studies investigating minority and Latina/o college student organizations are summarized to provide an idea of student experiences with these groups. The conceptual frameworks used to the guide the study are also briefly described.

Satisfaction with College

Participation and membership in university-sponsored organizations provided college students ample opportunities to have a greater magnitude of student-to-student interactions. Frequency of interactions was supported by the amount of time a student spends in college student organizations which in turn was said to be associated with overall satisfaction with college (Astin, 1993). Participation in college student organizations can create positive feelings about the overall college experience. According to Astin, the variables used in his longitudinal study that were shown to have positive effects with satisfaction in campus life "leaned heavily toward student interaction and social life" which included "hours per week spent in student clubs and organizations" (p. 285).

Student-to-student interaction and collegiate social life through student organization involvement has positive relationships with a favorable college experience (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). These favorable experiences reinforce high aspirations and goals for college. To achieve these aspirations and goals, these students tended to become more involved with their college experience. By increasing their involvement levels in their college experience, these students consequently increased their participation in campus life.

Abrahamowicz's (1988) study on the effects of college student organization membership on student perceptions of college satisfaction provided an analysis on the effects of a campus' student life, especially the effects participation in student organizations had on various measures of the college experience. Abrahamowicz's single-institution study compared quantitative measures of college satisfaction from a sample of student members involved with recognized university-funded organizations

and fraternities/sororities with those from students who were not members of these groups. By using the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) to assess these variables, the study found that significant differences existed between the college experiences of undergraduate students who were members of organizations compared to students who were not (Abrahamowicz, 1988).

Participants of college student organizations were more likely to perceive their educational experiences as having high quality compared to those of non-participants (i.e., participants were more involved in their overall college experience) (Abrahamowicz, 1988). Feelings of satisfaction and positive perceptions of relationships with faculty, administration, and students were also concluded to be significantly associated with student organization participation (Abrahamowicz, 1998). Thus, non-participants did not have the same level of connection to their campus compared to students who were members of college student organizations.

Participation in college student organizations appears to foster positive feelings about the college experience within students. Students involved with college organizations felt satisfied with their educational experience (i.e., gave positive ratings on how well they like college and the institution they were attending). When asked to respond to how well they liked college, a majority of college student organization members (65%) said they were "enthusiastic" about college compared to 17% of non-members of student organizations (Abrahamowicz, 1988). College student organization members also were found to have significantly more positive perceptions of their relationships with faculty, administrators, and students because of their connection to campus.

Increasing students' level of connection to their campus by providing numerous opportunities for peer interactions and endorsing a wide-ranging social life by way of student organizations were positively associated with students' feelings of satisfaction with the student life of their campus (Astin, 1993). Extracurricular participation in college student organizations benefited those who were least connected to their college campuses: "There is considerable evidence...that active participation in the extracurricular life of a campus can enhance..." positive attitudes about student life within individuals to make them feel more connected to campus (Noel, 1987, as cited in Craig & Warner, 1991, p. 42). The significant levels

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of campus satisfaction expressed by members of college student organizations tended to enhance their overall college experience.

Student Academic Learning

Astin (1993) postulated that a student's learning and development were directly proportional to the quality and quantity of a student's involvement in the academic experience. Astin noted that hours spent in college student organizations per week were positively associated to higher intellectual skills requiring independence and responsibility such as improvement in public speaking skills and holding an elected office. It appeared that participation in a college student organization impacted intellectual development by promoting awareness of both the educational environment and the resources and learning opportunities available for students to meet academic standards.

The influence campus organization participation had on student learning was emphasized by Smith and Griffin's study (1993) on the relationship between extracurricular involvement and psychosocial development. Smith and Griffin found that participation in extracurricular activities promoted academic autonomy for college students. Gaining academic autonomy was described as "enhancing the students' development of the ability to attain their educational goals with minimal help from others" (Smith & Griffin, 1993, p. 81). As levels of extracurricular involvement increased, academic autonomy increased. Especially for seniors, extracurricular involvement improved their ability to initiate career and lifestyle plans (Smith & Griffin, 1993).

In regards to college student organization membership and its effect on critical thinking and intellectual development, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) supported Astin's (1993) notion that the degree of involvement in activities (i.e., intellectual, vocational, social, athletic, etc.) was significantly associated with cognitive and affective growth. Pascarella and Terenzini, in their thorough literature review on how college affects student development, found that frequency and quality of students' interactions with other students and their involvement with extracurricular activities (e.g., college student organization participation) were positively associated with high educational aspirations: "The greater the students'

involvement in college, the greater will be the amount of student learning and personal development" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 36). As stated by the researchers, "perceived [cognitive] growth tended to be commensurate with involvement in activities that were consistent with it and supported it" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 147).

Measures of collegiate social participation had statistically significant positive effects on educational attainment for both men and women (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). When students were exposed to other achievement-oriented students through college student organizations and other social networks, students were able to acquire personal resources such as interpersonal skills, self-confidence, and specialized knowledge that encourage the realization of goals and aspirations (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Involvement in college student organizations could increase students' understanding of their abilities and limitations in their education environment. Thus, extracurricular activity participation could be a important facet in the college experience in that "such participation seems to be an effective means of stimulating [academic] development" (Williams & Winston, Jr., 1985, p. 58).

Minority and Latina/o College Student Organizations

Minority college student organizations have been described as serving the dual purpose of providing involvement opportunities in student life and making the campus community aware of an ethnic/racial group's presence on campus (Person & Christensen, 1996). By creating this awareness, these organizations hoped that all campus constituents realized, if not understand, the conditions facing minority college students. While it appeared that many minority students were aware of the existence of minority college student organizations on campus, many chose not to participate in them (Rooney, 1985). Rooney speculated that this was so because opportunities to integrate into the campus life of a PWI were limited by participation in minority college student organizations. This led the researcher to think that minority college students participating in these organizations had interactions only to those similar to other group members and not with the broader campus community (Rooney, 1985).

The most frequent positive reason for membership in these organizations was the opportunity "to 'interrelate' with those of a familiar background and culture" (Rooney, 1985, pg. 452). Minority college students who became members of these organizations were provided student-to-student interaction with same ethnic/racial peers that allowed the preservation of cultural identity. The most frequent negative reason for non-membership in these organizations was the perception of how these groups tended to "segregate [and] isolate" group members and form a "cliquey" atmosphere within the organization (Rooney, 1985, pg. 452). Students described these cliques as circles of friends that were not inclusive of other organization members (Rooney, 1985). Interestingly in Rooney's study, Chicana/os and Puerto Ricans were more critical of minority college student organizations than any other racial/ethnic group (African American, Asian American, and Native American).

Trevino (1992) found that a need and "desire to identify and associate with a group of people called Chicanos" tended to characterize the involvement of Chicano students participating in minority college student organizations (p. 119). Chicana/o students used their involvement in minority college student organizations to challenge the inequalities frequently faced by minority populations (Davis, 1995; Moscoso, 1995; Munoz, 1989; Trevino, 1992). Chicana/os favored those college student organizations that allowed them opportunities to work against the detrimental effects of discrimination and to work for the betterment of conditions for the Latina/o campus community (Trevino, 1992).

A small number of studies have been published on involvement in Latina/o college student organizations. A modest number of more recent student affairs practitioner-related articles have provided some information on programming strategies to improve Latina/o student involvement in campus activities (see, for example, Fuertes, Cothran, & Sedlacek, 1991; Fuertes & Sedlacek, 1991; Moscoso, 1995). An even lesser amount of empirical research has produced information on college and student characteristics that predicted Latina/o college student organization participation (for an example, see Trevino, 1992). Participation in Latina/o college student organizations appeared to provide students a mediating element that dealt with the effect of unfavorable educational environments for minority college students. By maintaining links to communities familiar to Latina/os before they entered college (Hurtado

& Carter, 1997), Latina/o college student organizations created "culture comforts" that allowed Latina/o college students to build a "home away from home" (Moscoso, 1995, p. 50). By creating such comforts, membership in these groups resulted in increased feelings of belonging within PWIs.

Participation in Latina/o college student organizations provided members a sense of community that not only fostered cultural pride and understanding, but also enhanced connections to the university environment where leadership is developed and strengthened (Fuertes, Cothran, & Sedlacek, 1991). By enhancing connections to the campus and community, participation in Latina/o college student organizations could influence levels of campus student involvement for Latina/os that eventually could impact overall student development.

Conceptual Frameworks

The two conceptual frameworks are used in this study that recognize the importance of college environments on student development and the cultural elements that shape students' worldviews, values, and behaviors. The mixture of these frameworks is effective in studying the environment and experiences apparent within PWIs that influence the nature of Latina/o college student involvement.

Astin's (1984) theory of student development guides the development and selection of variables used in the study and provides a framework for data analysis. Astin's theory can be used to explain the developmental changes that occur within students once they became involved with their college environment. Because "students learn by being involved", there is a direct correlation between involvement and student development (Astin, 1993, p. 36). Student involvement is seen as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1993, p. 297). Student involvement is said to occur on a continuum where "students manifest different degrees of involvement in a given object...[and] different degrees of involvement in different objects at different times" (Astin, 1984, p. 298). This study explores the degree of involvement Latina/os put forth in extracurricular activities. Along with quantitative measures of "how much" involvement students provide, there are also qualitative aspects (e.g., organization membership includes being an officer of the

group) that this study also considers by assessing leadership roles and involvement in community-based organizations.

An explanation of biculturalism is used to understand the impact of minority student adjustment within the two cultures (racial/ethnic and college). LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton's (1993) explanation of biculturalism considers not only an individual's ability to understand two different cultures, but also the ability to alter behavior to fit a particular social context. La Fromboise et al.'s bicultural competence model is different in how it defines the role that the individual has in social interactions within the two cultures. It is the individual who determines the degree and manner of affiliation with his or her culture of origin and second culture. LaFromboise et al. suggest that the relationship between a person's native culture and the culture in which he or she is living is more "bi-directional and orthogonal" rather than unidirectional (p. 399). Rather than choosing one culture over the other, individuals develop and maintain positive attitudes toward the native culture and attain competence in the second culture. Latina/o students according to this model remain connected to their culture, while at the same time establishing or maintaining connections to the college culture. Using this, student affairs research is able to break away from the idea that conformity is the norm for students to adjust and find acceptance on the college campus (Tierney, 1992). This study will explore this idea by exploring students' opinions and experiences with Latina/o and minority student organizations. Perceptions on whether these organizations serve as links to integrate ethnic/Latino culture to the campus environment is addressed to see if this has any impact on educational outcomes specific for the study.

Method

This study uses a cross-sectional survey research design. Two large, predominantly white, public, research extensive, flagship universities located in the Midwest were research sites for this study. Survey analyses for the study makes use of Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) data model for the assessment of change or growth in students during college. The basic purpose of the Input-Environment-Output data model is best described as a guide for assessing the potential impact of college

environments and experiences on student educational outcomes. Inputs, as used in the context of this study, refer to the characteristics of students up to the time of the study. Environmental measures refer to the programs, services, and groups on campus to which students are exposed to as result of attending college. Environmental measures also include the educational experiences provided from participation in college student organizations (Astin, 1993). Dependent variables (educational outcomes) for this study are measured after exposure to the college environment. In Astin's model, any changes or growth in the student are referred to as outputs and are subsequently examined to identify changes in students during college while statistically controlling for input characteristics and college environments (Astin, 1993).

The data used in this study were from a researcher-designed survey instrument used to learn more about Chicana/o and Puerto Rican student experiences with college student organizations. The survey consisted of 78 survey items. Survey items were developed based on a comprehensive review of the literature focusing on the effects of participation in college student organizations, minority student college experiences, and Latina/o student organizations. The survey was designed to provide information about the opinions and experiences Latina/os undergraduates had about these student organizations. The survey obtained information on the extent and level of participation in a number of extracurricular activities during college and high school. The survey also provided general demographic data.

Sample

The population of interest for this study was defined as Latina/o undergraduate students enrolled at PWIs. Undergraduates that self-identified themselves as "Hispanic" according to Spring 2002 enrollment data at these two institutions constituted the sampling frame for the study. Because categories of Latina/o origin or descent (e.g., Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.) were not supplied by the enrollment data, the sampling frame included all Latina/o subgroups. A convenience sample of Latina/o undergraduates was obtained from each institution. A total of 1,000 surveys were mailed to self-identified "Hispanic" undergraduates, 477 at Institution A and 523 at Institution B. Addresses classified as "undeliverable" were removed and replaced by 24 new student addresses. Eleven addresses were still

returned as undeliverable after replacement mailing. In all, 989 students, 472 from Institution A and 517 from Institution B, were contacted for participation in the study. From these students, 344 surveys were returned producing a 35% response rate. Surveys returned by graduate, law, and non-Hispanic students were eliminated from the final data. Of the returned surveys, 95% were useable for the study (N=328). 67% of the final sample was female. Student self-reports of Latina/o ethnicity indicated that the sample was comprised of the following: 57% Chicana/o, 17% Puerto Rican, and 26% other Latina/o subgroups.

Analyses

The analyses for this study proceeded in three parts: descriptive, factor, and multiple regression analysis. Descriptive analyses were used to examine group differences between Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students in the measures in the study. T-tests were completed to analyze mean differences of the measures. Exploratory factor analysis using principle axis factoring was employed as a data reduction technique. Hierarchical blocked regression was used in this study to investigate the potential influence of student, environment, and involvement factors on educational outcomes.

Table 1 lists the groups of variables and their respective scales. The dependent variable, satisfaction with college, is a composite of survey items regarding satisfaction with college activities and experiences. It consists of the sum total of student responses to seven items on satisfaction with various campus components. Three items asked students to rate their experiences with Latina/o, minority, and other college student organizations. A 5-point scale ranging from 1 = very satisfied to 4 = very satisfied, and 0 = no experience provided measures for these items. Three additional items asked students to rate their experiences with college administration/staff, professors, and students/peers. Since it was assumed that all students had some experience with these three items, responses of "no experience" (value equal to "0") were replaced with the mean value of that item. One item measured students' response to being satisfied with the overall college experience. This item was scored on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The second dependent variable, academic achievement, is

student-reported grade point averages (G.P.A.) at the time of the study ranging from 1=no G.P.A. to 7=4.0.

— Place Table 1 about here —

Three groups of independent variables are used in the study: student background characteristics and two types of environmental variables. The independent variables are ordered in temporal sequence of occurrence in the I-E-O data model (Astin, 1993). The student background variables include student demographics such as gender, age, nativity (i.e., amount of years lived in the United States), parent educational level, and predisposition to participate in college organizations (e.g., participant in high school extracurricular activities, etc.). The second group is the environmental variables, such as place of residence and environmental measures from the factor analysis. The last group of independent variables are measures of student involvement. These measures are part of the student's college experiences.

Limitations

This investigation of student involvement behaviors for Chicana/os and Puerto Ricans attending PWIs has several limitations that should be considered. First, the student sample contained only Latina/os attending large, public, flagship research universities, so the results may not generalize to all other institutions. The lack of diversity in institutional type avoids the examination of any effects this may have on the educational outcomes and student involvement experiences. This is especially important to consider since Latina/os made up 56% of the enrollments at two-year colleges in 1998 (Garcia, 2001). A student sample with a more diverse representation of institutional types, including two-year colleges and Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), could present a more comprehensive description of Latina/o student experiences with college extracurricular activities. When studying Latina/o populations, one should also consider the regional differences associated with Latina/os in the United States. There could be substantial differences in how Latina/o and minority organizations were perceived by students in the Midwest compared to Latina/os from the Southwest and Western states, where politically-active Latino

organizations such as MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan) were more established and visible (Munoz, 1986). There could also be differences should the sample contained schools from the East Coast, where large populations of Puerto Rican students attend. In any case, the study is limited in that information was obtained only from Latina/os in the Midwest, who may have different views and experiences with Latina/o student organizations compared to students from other regions.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Survey data was examined to determine if there were any distinct institutional characteristics and individual experiences that influenced Chicana/o and Puerto Rican student involvement, as well as to discover any factors that enhanced the understanding of cultural differences shaping their involvement. Analysis of the data found that Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students did not differ in their perceptions of college activities and environments. Differences were found, however, for perceptions of college student organizations. Table 2 reports the mean, standard deviation, and t-tests for perceptions of college organizations. Since the focus of this analysis is on differences between Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students, data for Latina/o subgroups are excluded here.

— Place Table 2 about here —

A majority of Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students in the study (63%) agree that college organizations teach students to become more independent in the college environment. This supports Baxter Magolda's (1992) assertion that extracurricular participation enhances intellectual development by providing student organization members a sense of being independent by making them more knowledgeable of the campus environment. In looking at Table 2, Chicana/o students have significantly different mean levels of agreement with this perception of college student organizations ($t=2.64$, $p<.01$). Chicana/o students were more likely to feel that college student organizations in general provide members opportunities to become more independent. When asked if they preferred to participate in non-minority

student organizations than minority student organizations, a larger proportion (43%) of Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students disagree with the statement. Students do not differ significantly in responses to whether they prefer to participate in non-minority student organizations than minority student organizations.

Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students believe that these organizations provide members opportunities to learn more about their cultural background, with 84% agreeing that minority student organization participation allow students to explore and discover their cultural and racial heritage. In considering their own personal experiences and contact with minority student organizations, over two-fifths of the Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students in this study (41%) report that these organizations have cliques that are not inclusive of other members, similar to the findings from Rooney (1985). Although encounters with cliques appear to be a negative experience of minority student organizations, close to half (49%) still report that these groups are important features in their college experience. In examining Table 2, differences on views and experiences with minority student organizations are not significant between Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students.

Table 2 shows that Chicana/o students are more likely than Puerto Rican students to have positive perceptions of Latina/o student organizations. A majority of these students (60%) feel that Latina/o student organizations empower the Latina/o student community. Chicana/os and Puerto Rican participant responses support Davis' (1997) account that participation in Latina/o student organizations provides not only an outlet to express culture, but provides a means toward empowering the Latina/o student community. Chicana/os are significantly more likely to agree that Latina/o student organizations empower students compared to Puerto Ricans ($t=.979$, $p<.05$). For Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students, 64% indicate that Latina/o student organizations contribute to the overall leadership development of members. Student responses support Fuertes, Cothran, and Sedlacek's (1991) ideas that participation in Latina/o student organizations develop and strengthen leadership. Chicana/o students are found to have significantly more levels of agreement with the statement that leadership development could result from Latina/o student organizations compared to Puerto Rican students in the study ($t=.991$, $p<.001$). A larger

proportion of Chicana/os and Puerto Rican students (45%) also indicate that these organizations enhance their connections to the overall college community. Similar to Hurtado and Carter (1997), students in the present study largely agree that participation in these organizations connect students to their campus. Chicana/o students again indicate significantly higher levels of agreement that Latina/o student organizations provide students these campus connections ($t=3.62$, $p<.001$). Over half (51%) of the Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students in the study perceive Latina/o student organizations as providing a "home away from home" for Latina/o college students. The finding reflects what Moscoso (1995) describes as the "culture comfort" that Latina/o student organizations provide to students, where an environment was created to make them have a sense of belonging within PWIs. Chicana/o students have significantly higher levels of agreement that these organizations provide a "home" for students compared to Puerto Rican students ($t=3.01$, $p<01$).

Factor Analyses

Fifty-one items from the survey were reduced to eight subsets reflecting dimensions of the college experience and serve as environmental variables.

— Place Table 3 about here —

After varimax rotation, an eight-factor solution was selected for the development of composite scaled variables. Table 3 shows the results of the eight-factor solution and the items that loaded onto each factor, with each factor's corresponding alpha coefficient. Alpha coefficient values ranging between .50 and .60 are acceptable for research purposes (Ary et al., 1996; Mertens, 1998). For *Cultural Bridges*, the alpha coefficient is calculated to be .0334, a value that is considered to be on the low end (Ary et al., 1996). However, the primary goal of this study is to explore Latina/o participation with college student organizations and the factor scale was kept in subsequent analyses and used as one dimension of the college environment that may influence educational outcomes. *Campus Alienation*, includes items indicating perceptions of whether college life for minority students entail experiences that distance them

from the campus community, as well as perceptions of physical environment cues that reflect the dominance of a predominantly white culture (Bennett, 1999). *Cultural Bridges*, is composed of items that indicate the degree to which minority and Latina/o student organizations establish connections to the campus and surrounding communities. *Cultural Expression* includes items assessing opportunities provided by Latina/o and minority student organizations for students to express, learn more about, and maintain links with their cultural background. *Personal Growth* consists of items identifying the extent to which college student organizations stimulate personal development and self-awareness of skills (Williams & Winston, Jr., 1985). *Latina/o Student Organization Pull*, is comprised of items identifying campus and Latina/o student organization characteristics that elicit student participation. *Campus Life* measures student perceptions of campus opportunities for participation in extracurricular activities. *Self-evaluation*, consists of items that reflect awareness of strategies conducive to student learning. Factor analysis identified these different types of college experiences that were used as college environmental variables used in the regression models.

Regression Analyses

Variables were entered into the regression in blocks that conceptually followed Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) data model. The first block of variables entered into the regression was student background characteristics, student inputs. The second block consisted of variables describing student perceptions of college environments and experiences that were developed from the factor analysis. The third block included measures of student involvement in organizations. Only variables within each block that met a critical alpha level $\alpha=.05$ or lower were kept in the final regression equation for the model. Variables whose coefficients remained significant once all environmental variables had been entered into the regression equation were identified.

Satisfaction with college. Table 4 shows that seven variables are significant, accounting for 32% (Adjusted $R^2=.315$) of the variance in satisfaction with college. Satisfaction with college is not significantly influenced by any student background measures. This finding is expected for the study. The

degree of satisfaction with college is not necessarily contingent on measures of student background, rather it is more influenced by college environments and experiences (Astin, 1993). The findings indicate that Latina/o student satisfaction with college may increase if the campus is perceived to provide opportunities for participation in extracurricular activities. The significant effect of perceptions of Campus Life supports previous research on the outcomes associated with providing numerous opportunities for peer interactions and endorsing a wide-ranging social life by way of college student organizations (Astin, 1993). The present study supports this particular finding highlighting the specific effects of student perceptions of minority and Latina/o organizations. Latina/o students that agree minority and Latina/o organizations enhance campus and community connections (Cultural Bridges) are more likely to have higher levels of satisfaction with their college experience.

The more students notice the appealing qualities of participation in Latina/o student organizations (Latina/o Student Organization Pull) satisfaction levels will likely increase. Similarly, Fuertes, Cothran, and Sedlacek (1991) reported that positive aspects of Latina/o college student organizations, such as providing members a sense of community and fostering cultural pride, enhance student satisfaction with their educational experience. Conversely, if Latina/os do not sense that their presence on campus is welcomed (Campus Alienation) satisfaction with the educational experience will likely decrease. Additionally Gossett, Cuyjet, and Cockriel (1996) indicated that students are generally less satisfied with college when they had campus experiences that distanced them from the entire college community, despite efforts by universities to develop cultural student centers and minority student services. Perceiving Latina/o student organizations as having mostly political activism goals has a negative effect on satisfaction with college. Some Latina/os perceive Latina/o student organizations as being too narrow in their focus, emphasizing activities such as boycotts and fasting, despite the benefits these organizations offered to the campus community (Moscoso, 1992). Participation in minority college student organizations or participation in community-based organizations appears to increase college satisfaction. College satisfaction resulting from participation in these organizations possibly is the result of being involved in supportive organizational niches (Bennett, 1999; Johnson, 1999). These types of

organizations assist students in their adjustment to culturally different and, at times, socially disaffecting campus environments.

— Place Table 4 about here —

Academic achievement. An examination of Table 5 shows that student background characteristics do not serve as significant predictors for academic achievement. Campus Life, Self-evaluation, perceiving oneself as attaining educational goals with minimal help, being a member of a minority organization, being a participant in community-based or Latina/o organization, as well as being an officer of a Latina/o student organization all are statistically significant predictors in the regression. These seven variables account for 9% (R^2=.094) of the variance in ~~satisfaction with college~~ academic achievement. While a large proportion of variance is unexplained, it should be noted that the purpose of the regression is strictly exploratory in nature. The creation of the best predictive regression model for academic achievement was not the goal of the study. Rather, the purpose of the analyses is to investigate the effects of involvement with Latina/o, minority, and other college student organizations on the educational outcome. A small R^2 is still informative for it provides a *statistical*, rather than *causal*, explanation for the outcome (Lewis-Beck, 1989). That being said, academic achievement is significantly influenced by these factors.

The findings indicate that academic achievement is strongly influenced by student self-awareness of academic abilities and goals. The more Latina/o students are confident in their strategies to succeed academically, the greater their levels of academic achievement. A campus that is supportive of student extracurricular involvement also contributes positively to this outcome. Additionally, if Latina/o students participate in community-based organizations or minority student organizations, their level of academic achievement (i.e., GPA) will likely increase. It is possible that participation in Latina/o student organizations, whether as a member or officer, has a negative impact on academic achievement. However, for general membership, this is likely a consequence of GPA, rather than a cause. Latina/o students searching for resources to improve their GPA may initially seek them out in Latina/o student

organizations. Students who are in need of improving their academic performance may participate in Latina/o student organizations to receive academic support, thus creating the negative coefficient.

— Place Table 5 about here —

Discussion

This study provides information for student affairs professionals looking for ways to improve the college experience for Latina/os attending large public PWIs. It is important to examine specifically how Latina/o college student organizations facilitate educational outcomes for Latina/o students. Information on these outcomes provides data useful to colleges and universities as they work to augment the extracurricular opportunities available on campus that might enhance Latina/o student college satisfaction and academic achievement. Knowledge is gained on the nature of Latina/o student involvement in extracurricular activities.

This study recognizes the importance of seeking out within-group differences when studying the extracurricular involvement of ethnic groups. This study investigates any possible differences between Chicana/os and Puerto Rican students. These students do not differ much on minority organization opinions and experiences. When viewing minority organizations in a general sense, there is not much difference in the responses from these two Latina/o subgroups. However, when asked to specifically provide information on Latina/o student organization opinions and experiences, Puerto Ricans tend to be more critical of these organizations. Latina/os, in general, were already described as being the most critical of minority organizations (Rooney, 1985). The present study found that Puerto Ricans, specifically, are more judgmental of Latina/o student organizations. This difference could be explained by larger number of Chicana/os comprising the total Latina/o undergraduate student population at both institutions. Finding this within-group difference emphasizes the fact that different research strategies are

needed to assess the various groups within the Latino community: 1st generation college students; immigrant vs. United States citizen; bilingual vs. English-speaking only; multi-racial; and so on.

This study also reveals the role of Campus Life in satisfaction with college and academic achievement. The extent to which colleges provide and endorse extracurricular opportunities for its students, Campus Life, has a significant effect on satisfaction with college and academic achievement. Students perceiving that their campus has an active student life likely have more opportunities to interact with college student organizations. These interactions that are initiated by participation in college student organizations provide contact with other students, faculty, and staff. This eventually influences how students feel about their connections to campus (Abrahamowicz, 1988; Astin, 1993), as well as exposes them to achievement-oriented students and academic resources (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Williams & Winston, 1985).

This study also reveals the important influences that participation in community-based organizations and minority student organizations has on educational outcomes for Latina/o college students. The importance of community-based organizations, while unique for this study, should not be surprising for Latina/o college students. Latina/o student involvement is characterized by community service and advocacy for a variety of social concerns (Davis, 1997). Community-based organizations may provide Latina/o students experiential activities where they learn responsibility, leadership, and empowerment which may enhance student learning and satisfaction (Davis, 1997; Moscoso, 1995; Trevino, 1992). The influence of participation in minority student organizations is supported by past research. Rooney (1985) reported that students who were involved with minority student organizations tended to have "good" to "very good" feelings toward their university. Rooney (1985) described minority student organizations as important features of the minority student college experience, where students feel that they receive recognition of their academic achievements from members.

It is important to note that two bicultural competence factors, *Cultural Bridges* and *Latina/o Student Organization Pull*, are significant positive influences on college satisfaction. The extent to which students believe minority and Latina/o organizations promote campus and cultural participation is a

positive indicator of college satisfaction. Also, perceiving that Latina/o student organizations provide beneficial experiences for members has a positive effect on this outcome. Discovering that these organizations have a role in promoting satisfaction supported the 'bi-directional impact" idea in the bicultural competence model (LaFromboise et al., 1993). From this idea, students use these organizations to incorporate their cultural identity into the college community, thus maintaining a positive relationship between both cultures without choosing one over the other. Using these organizations as a strategy to develop positive attitudes toward the college experience could enhance overall satisfaction.

Researchers are provided an open door to explore additional facets of the extracurricular involvement of Chicana/os and Puerto Ricans introduced through this study. There is little research on Latina/o student experiences or their involvement with extracurricular activities, and even less research on their participation in Latina/o student organizations. In an analysis of thirty years of race and ethnic scholarship in one leading student affairs journal, there was only *one* article related to Latina/os (Banning, Ahuna, & Hughes, 2000). Especially in higher education literature, there is relatively little theory and research on how race and ethnicity affects student involvement in college student organizations (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Trevino, 1992). Educators have not yet developed a sense of urgency to deal with the long-term consequences of these changes, especially in higher education (Estrada, 1988).

Table 1

Variables Used in the Study, Scale Values, and Coding

Variable	Scale	Code
Dependent Variables		
Satisfaction with college	Composite	Scale items
Academic achievement	1 = Do not have GPA 2 = 1.99 or below 3 = 2.00 – 2.49 4 = 2.50 – 2.99 5 = 3.00 – 3.49 6 = 3.50 – 3.99 7 = 4.00 or higher	1 - 7
Student Background		
Female	Dichotomous: Male, Female	1 - 2
Age	1 = 17 years or younger to 6 = 22 years or older	1 - 6
Year in school	Freshman to Senior	1 - 4
Latina/o ethnicity	Chicana/o, Puerto Rican, Other Latino (referent group)	Dummy coded
Percentage of life lived in the United States (nativity)	1 = 20.0-29.9% to 6 = 100%/whole life	1 - 6
Parent education level	Composite, sum of both father and mother education levels each scored: 1 = high school diploma or less to 7 = doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.), with 0 = not known.	Scale items
Participant in high school extracurricular activities	Dichotomous: No; Yes	1 - 2
Officer of any high school extracurricular activity	Dichotomous: No; Yes	1 – 2
Participant in community-based organizations in high school	Dichotomous: No; Yes	1 - 2
Participant in high school Latina/o student organization	Dichotomous: No; Yes	1 - 2
College Environments and Experiences		
Residence while in college	Dichotomous: on-campus; off-campus	1 - 2
Campus alienation	Composite	Scale items in Table 3
Campus bridges	Composite	Scale items in Table 3
Cultural expression	Composite	Scale items in Table 3
Personal growth	Composite	Scale items in Table 3
Latina/o student organization pull	Composite	Scale items in Table 3
Campus life	Composite	Scale items in Table 3
Self-evaluation	Composite	Scale items in Table 3

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Table 1 continued

Variables Used in the Study, Coding, and Value Labels

Variable	Scale	Code
College Environments and Experiences (continued)		
Latina/o student organizations mainly attract members who are militant.	Strongly disagree to Strongly agree	1 - 5
Latina/o student organizations mostly emphasize political activism goals.	Strongly disagree to Strongly agree	1 - 5
CSOs take time and energy away from activities related to academic learning.	Strongly disagree to Strongly agree	1 - 5
I am capable of attaining educational goals with minimal help from others.	Strongly disagree to Strongly agree	1 - 5
I consider myself to be an activist.	Strongly disagree to Strongly agree	1 - 5
Involvement with Organizations		
Participant community-based organization in college	Dichotomous: No; Yes	1 – 2
Participant minority college student organization	Dichotomous: No; Yes	1 – 2
Participant Latina/o college student organization	Dichotomous: No; Yes	1 – 2
Officer of any Latina/o college student organization	Dichotomous: No; Yes	1 – 2

Note: CSO = College student organization; LSO = Latina/o student organization; MSO = Minority student organization.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation, T-tests, and Percentages for Perceptions of College Activities and Environments Reported by Chicana/o (n=188) and Puerto Rican (n=54) Students

Variables[a]	Chicana/o M	Chicana/o SD	Puerto Rican M	Puerto Rican SD	T-test	df ≥ ± 1.960[b]	CPR %[c]
Attitudes Toward Student Organizations							
College Student Organizations (CSOs)							
CSOs make students more independent.	3.73	.979	3.31	1.13	2.64	SIG**	63
Rather participate in non-MSOs than MSOs.	2.77	1.21	2.74	1.20	.136		43
Minority Student Organizations (MSOs)							
MSOs influence student ethnic/racial identity development.	3.96	.783	3.80	.856	1.34		84
MSOs have cliques that are not inclusive of others.	3.21	1.06	3.31	.987	-.679		41
MSOs are important features in college experience	3.37	1.28	3.97	1.18	1.53		49
Latina/o Student Organizations (LSOs)							
LSOs empower the Latina/o student community.	3.63	.986	3.28	.979	2.34	SIG*	60
LSOs contribute to the overall leadership development of Latina/os.	3.79	.886	3.33	.991	3.25	SIG***	64
LSOs enhance connections to the college community.	3.36	.989	2.80	1.05	3.62	SIG***	45
LSOs provide a "home away from home" for Latina/o students.	3.53	1.03	3.05	1.01	3.01	SIG**	51

[a]5-point scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

[b]*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

[c]Percentage of Chicana/o and Puerto Rican students marking "agree" or "strongly agree", rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 3

Factor Analysis Results and Loadings

	Factor		
Independent variables	1	2	3
Campus Alienation			
Minorities must conform to white ways to adjust	.719		
Alienation typifies minor. college student experience	.685		
Campus activities reflect interests of white population	.651		
Campus interactions btw. minorities/whites uneasy	.632		
Campus physical environment white dominated	.627		
Minorities representatives, not individuals, in class	.561		
Ethnic clustering is cultural support	.470		
Feel "at home" in college community	-.456		
Campus knowledgeable about Latina/o culture	-.434		
Observed and/or experienced discrimination on campus	.398		
Prefer Latino student center over minority affairs	.375		
Rather participate in non-MSO than MSO	-.362		
Observed and/or experienced hostility on campus	.344		
Reliability coefficient (alpha α)	.5431		
13 items			
Cultural Bridges			
Rather participate in non-MSO than MSO		-.623	
LSO segregate Latina/os from college community		-.618	
MSO integrate students into college community		.555	
MSO are important features in college experience		.513	
Non-MSO more beneficial than MSO		-.498	
MSO have cliques that are not inclusive of others		-.495	
LSO enhance connections to college community		.482	
Ethnic clustering is segregating		-.480	
Ethnic clustering is cultural support		.463	
LSO provide cultural activities for college community		.414	
MSO opportunities to challenge inequalities		.350	
LSO influence Latina/o extracurricular participation		.340	
Reliability coefficient (alpha α)		.0334[a]	
12 items			
Cultural Expression			
MSO influence student racial/ethnic identity			.666
MSO allow students to explore racial/ethnic heritage			.654
MSO connections with similar culture students			.517
MSO provide outlets to express culture			.480
MSO opportunities to challenge inequalities			.406
LSO offer involvement in local Latina/o community			.392
MSO offer culturally relevant excurr opportunities			.385
LSO empower Latina/o student community			.369
MSO develop family-like relationships			.346
Reliability coefficient (alpha α)			.7944
9 items			
Percent of Variance	8.4	7.4	5.8

Table 5 continued

Factor Analysis Results and Loadings

	Factor			
Independent variables	4	5	6	7
Personal Growth				
CSO make students independent	.769			
CSO make students responsible	.702			
CSO interaction with achievement-oriented students	.601			
CSO provide understanding of personal limitations	.458			
Reliability coefficient (alpha α)	.7614			
4 items				
Latina/o Student Organization Pull				
LSO contribute Latina/o leadership development		.518		
LSO provide a "home away from home"		.468		
MSO develop family-like relationships		.465		
Observed and/or experienced hostility on campus		.409		
LSO influence Latina/o extracurricular participation		.408		
LSO educate campus on Latina/o issues		.402		
LSO enhance connections to college community		.371		
Observed and/or experienced discrimination on campus		.334		
Reliability coefficient (alpha α)		.7687		
8 items				
Campus Life				
Extracurricular activity participation easy			.511	
Feel part of the student life on campus			.497	
Interested in extracurricular activity participation			.441	
Extracurricular activity supported by faculty and staff			.426	
Reliability coefficient (alpha α)			.6629	
4 items				
Self-Evaluation				
Explored personal interests, values, and goals				.667
Have academic skills needed to succeed in college				.537
Seek out additional learning opportunities				.332
Reliability coefficient (alpha α)				.5151
3 items				
Percent of Variance	3.9	3.4	2.7	2.3
Total Percent		38.8		

Note: CSO = College student organization, LSO = Latina/o student organization, MSO = Minority student organization.

[a]For exploratory purposes, the factor was kept in development of scales used for analyses.

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Table 4

Student Background, College Environment and Experiences, and Involvement Measures Regressed onto Satisfaction with College (N=328)

Variables in the regression	Simple r	Standardized Beta
Student Background		
Female	.140**	.067
Age	-.115*	.050
Year in school	-.085	-.083
Chicana/o	.070	.061
Puerto Rican	-.031	.087
Percent of life lived in United States	.034	-.009
Parent educational level	.073	.056
Participant high school extracurricular activities	.186***	.061
Officer of any high school extracurricular activity	.171**	.069
Participant community-based organizations in high school	.149**	.027
Participant Latina/o high school student organizations	.051	.007
College Environments and Experiences		
Lived on campus	-.138*	.074
Campus alienation	-.042	-.171**
Cultural bridges	.301***	.158**
Cultural expression	.332***	.032
Personal growth	.281***	.039
Latina/o student organization pull	.315***	.140*
Campus life	.418***	.240***
Self-evaluation	.241***	.085
LSO mostly emphasize political activism goals	-.055	-.099*
LSO attract mainly members who are militant	-.023	.032
CSO take time and energy away from academic learning	-.044	.037
Capable of attaining educational goals with minimal help	.038	.037
Consider myself to be an activist	.077	-.060
Involvement with Organizations		
Participant community-based organization in college	.191***	.125**
Participant minority college student organization	.265***	.168*
Participant Latina/o college student organization	.249***	.050
Officer of any Latina/o college student organization	.170**	.001
R^2	.376	
Adjusted R^2	.318	

Note: CSO = College student organization, LSO = Latina/o student organization.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 5

Student Background, College Environment and Experiences, and Involvement Measures Regressed onto Academic Achievement (Overall Grade Point Average) (N=328)

Variables in the regression	Simple r	Standardized Beta
Student Background		
Female	.073	.096
Age	-.051	-.123
Year in school	-.013	.087
Chicana/o	-.105	-.064
Puerto Rican	-.005	-.027
Percent of life lived in United States	-.077	-.104
Parent educational level	.155**	.050
Participant high school extracurricular activities	.022	-.026
Officer of any high school extracurricular activity	.043	.073
Participant community-based organizations in high school	.048	-.046
Participant Latina/o high school student organizations	-.056	.014
College Environments and Experiences		
Lived on campus	-.016	-.041
Campus alienation	-.069	.014
Cultural bridges	-.021	-.008
Cultural expression	.006	-.007
Personal growth	.038	-.051
Latina/o student organization pull	-.066	-.002
Campus life	.126*	.134*
Self-evaluation	.184***	.159**
LSO mostly emphasize political activism goals	-.043	-.039
LSO attract mainly members who are militant	-.003	-.042
CSO take time and energy away from academic learning	.055	.066
Capable of attaining educational goals with minimal help	.165**	.120*
Consider myself to be an activist	.032	-.033
Involvement with Organizations		
Participant community-based organization in college	.137*	.124*
Participant minority college student organization	-.059	.205*
Participant Latina/o college student organization	-.120*	-.250*
Officer of any Latina/o college student organization	-.168**	-.202**
R^2	.170	
Adjusted R^2	.092	

Note: CSO = College student organization, LSO = Latina/o student organization.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

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